



COMPELLENT HELPS GM2 LOGISTICS VIRTUALIZE FOR A GREENER FUTURE



No one buys yesterday's news, and in the "just-in-time" world of wholesale paper distribution, no one buys yesterday's newspaper either. For U.K.-based gm2 Logistics Ltd., a warehousing and logistics company headquartered near London, a flexible and reliable storage platform is key to ensuring that about 740 tons of paper products are delivered to more than 1,350

customers on time every day. The IT infrastructure at gm2 Logistics supports two central distribution centers (CDCs) and 7 regional distribution centers (RDCs) that are responsible for warehousing, trucking, shipping, and other services for one of the largest paper merchants in the U.K. and Ireland.

High availability and low costs are essential in this extremely competitive, low-margin industry. Any downtime would leave trucks wasting time on docks waiting to be loaded, and running out of storage meant taking a system down and potentially disrupting deliveries. As the company's aging storage system struggled to support growing demand for capacity, John Boyd, IT manager at gm2 Logistics, turned to server and storage virtualization to simplify data management and ensure business continuity.

"We were constantly shuffling data from one place to another, which was very labor-intensive and made it impossible to predict and prepare for changing data requirements," Boyd explains. "High availability across all 80 or so servers was just something we had talked about before. We sell about £2.7million of paper a day, so we can't afford any downtime—we have to be 24/7."

After looking at several vendors and following the recommendation of a local IT support company, Boyd and his team decided to implement two Compellent Storage Center storage area networks (SANs), located 135 miles apart. "A lot of why we chose Compellent came down to a lack of mystique," Boyd explains. "We looked at competitors and only saw complications and a significant amount of retraining. The ease with which Storage Center could be managed and the capabilities that came with it out of the box weren't true of any of the other products we considered."



"The modular architecture of the Compellent SAN means that we can scale quickly and as needed—without a huge investment upfront. In the fast-paced world of 'just in time' distribution, that's great news."

JOHN BOYD
IT Manager
gm2 Logistics

RESULTS REPORTED BY GM2 LOGISTICS

- » High availability and improved business continuity minimize downtime and ensure 24/7 operations
- » Virtualization and Boot from SAN technology results in reduced data center footprint by one third and less power consumption
- » Easy to use applications allow the IT team to manage additional storage without additional staff
- » Data Instant Replay allows rapid recovery of lost or deleted files

OPERATING SYSTEMS

- » Windows 2000, Windows 2003

APPLICATIONS

- » VMware
- » Exchange 5.5
- » SQL Server
- » Citrix

COPILOT

Copilot Support, Compellent's comprehensive customer service and technical support offering, provides exceptional system support through online incident tracking and automated event notification.

For Compellent customers, this means that in the event of a drive failure or other system threat, Copilot alerts system administrators and provides valuable insight to the level of emergency and potential solutions. Having a proactive and responsive Copilot team offers Boyd peace of mind in the event that an unforeseen problem arises.

"The Copilot Support team has guided us through the installation process and helped us out tremendously. It's great to know that they are looking out for us."

JOHN BOYD
IT Manager
gm2 Logistics

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BOOT FROM SAN AND VIRTUALIZATION CREATE GREENER FOOTPRINT

By virtualizing the environment, gm2 Logistics can easily scale applications and storage with minimal disruption. "For example, doubling a server's processors took only a matter of minutes—that kind of upgradeability means my team can be more productive," explains Boyd.

Virtualization has also enabled gm2 Logistics to reduce its data center footprint by a third—without having to increase staffing. To achieve this reduction while increasing performance and availability, Boyd boots physical and virtual servers from the SAN using Compellent Server Instant Replay™ software. "Not only does booting from SAN bring our servers online instantly—we have also been able to eliminate a lot of hardware from our environment entirely," says Boyd. "That means we're consuming less power, which is great for both the environment and our pocketbook."

Virtualization has led to a greater flexibility to respond to changing business needs and increased power efficiency—a huge win for a company that is committed to reducing the environmental impact of its business processes. By consolidating systems and recovering square footage in the data center, gm2 Logistics has lowered costs.

"Virtualization has enabled us to better plan to meet our data requirements as advanced applications evolve," Boyd says. "The ability to use VMware in conjunction with the SAN to provision servers from one environment to another means that downtime is absolutely minimized."

COMPELLENT REPLICATION HELPS KEEP THE PAPER ROLLING

To ensure business continuity, Boyd uses Compellent Data Instant Replay™ and Remote Instant Replay™ software to take a high number of snapshots, called Replays.

Replays are asynchronously replicated over IP to the remote site using existing bandwidth. With Compellent's Thin Replication software, gm2 Logistics can customize transfer rates for each volume based on link speed, time of day and replication priority.

The combination of Data Instant Replay and Remote Instant Replay has significantly reduced the time and effort it takes to recover inadvertently deleted files—snapshots can be set for every 15 minutes, 12 hours, or anywhere between to meet varying needs.

AUTOMATED TIERED STORAGE SAVES TIME AND EFFORT

Compellent Data Progression™ software automatically classifies and migrates data at the block level between tiers of storage based on frequency of use. As a result, gm2 Logistics can now process critical "just-in-time" data from high-performance Tier 1 Fibre Channel storage and once that data becomes inactive, it is automatically moved to lower-cost mid-tier drives. This level of automation dramatically reduces the IT staff effort and decreases the risks associated with manually moving data.

"The modular architecture of the Compellent SAN means that we can scale quickly and as needed—without a huge investment upfront," Boyd says. "In the fast-paced world of 'just in time' distribution, that's great news." Compellent's modular architecture also allows gm2 Logistics to utilize a combination of iSCSI and Fibre Channel servers, matching cost and performance with specific application needs.

Compellent's powerful and easy to use software applications enable Boyd and his team to manage the system entirely in-house. "The simplicity of the system meant that we didn't have to undergo a significant amount of staff retraining," Boyd says. "It's important that we have our hands firmly on the tiller, and not be dependent on multiple third parties to manage and protect our data."